

NIKOLAOS I. LIVANOS, Αφηγηματική παράδοση και ιστορικότητα 10ος–17ος αι. Η *Ανάμνησις μερική περί τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους Ἄθω* (BHG 1054u) (Αθωνικά Σύμμεικτα 13). Athens: Ινστιτούτο Ιστορικών Ερευνών / Εθνικό Ίδρυμα Ερευνών 2025. 308 pp., 2 maps. – ISBN 978-960-371-097-4

• GEORGI PARPULOV, Bergische Universität Wuppertal
(parpulov@uni-wuppertal.de)

Just like their better-known Constantinopolitan counterpart,¹ the ‘so-called *Patria*’ (τὰ λεγόμενα πάτρια) of the Holy Mountain are a loose collection of tales: the Virgin Mary and Lazarus visiting Athos, Emperor Theodosius founding the Monastery of Vatopedi, the *Portaitissa* icon arriving by sea at Iviron, an image of St George miraculously transferred from Palestine to Zographou, and a giant mushroom sprouting from the freshly-consecrated altar of Xeropotamou’s main church. While these five incidents supposedly took place in the first, fourth, and ninth-to-eleventh centuries, the text that describes them is only found in manuscripts of sixteenth-century or later date.² Edited in print twice, in 1885 and 1912, it had not been much studied before NIKOLAOS LIVANOS made it the subject of his monograph.³

LIVANOS presents a new edition of the *Patria* on the basis of their oldest precisely dated copy Diktyon 48683 (pp. 62–69) whose text slightly differs from the one published in 1912.⁴ (Differences with the 1885 edition are a

1. ABRECHT BERGER (tr.), *Accounts of Medieval Constantinople: the Patria* (Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 24). Cambridge MA 2013.

2. I do not know why LIVANOS thinks that the Slavonic translation of the *Patria* was made in 1508 (pp. 33, 37, 177, 211, 222). In fact this translation is ascribed to a ‘*hieromonk* Gabriel, notary of the Holy Mountain’s conciliar church at the Protaton’; since the manuscript identifies him as a mere notary, he must have worked on the text *before* he became *Protos*; he is first attested as *Protos* in 1515. See GEORGI PARPULOV, *The Slavonic Patria of Mount Athos* (BHG 1054u + BHG 2333). Plovdiv 2014, pp. 2–3, 14, 55.

3. A partial exception is the short article by ALEXANDR V. LARIONOV, «Патриа Святой Горы Афон» (*Patria Athonensia*) как памятник афонской апокрифической истории. *Метафраст* 1.3 (2020) pp. 60–83.

4. I cite between parentheses the page numbers of LIVANOS’ edition versus that of SPYRIDON LAMPROS (1912): ζωὴν ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι (p. 63) vs. ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι ζωὴν αἰώνιον (p. 125); πρόσρρησιν (p. 64) vs. πρόρρησιν (p. 127); Παράδεισον (p. 64) vs. Περιβόλιον (p. 127); πάντα ἐξηφάνισεν ἕως ἐδάφους τῆς γῆς (p. 65) vs. ἐκ βάθρων ἐδαφίασεν ὁ ἀλιτήριος θῆρ (p. 127); ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ (p. 65) vs. ἐν τῷ πελάγει (p. 127); τῷ βασιλεὶ ἐνεφάνησαν τὰς γραφὰς τοῦ ἀδελφίδου αὐτοῦ καὶ πάντα σαφηνίσαντες καὶ περὶ τοῦ

little bit more substantial.) He also surveys the *Patria*'s transmission in no less than thirty-four sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries codices (pp. 46–60). Some of these (e.g. Diktyon 72708) he examined directly (pp. 52–53), while others (is it not clear how many) he evidently knew just from descriptions – this must be why he failed to notice that the supposedly undated Diktyon 28161 (pp. 56–57) carries a scribal colophon of AD 1614.⁵

LIVANOS is aware that the *Patria* are of little use as source material for Mount Athos' pre-sixteenth-century past but still thinks they might on occasion contain some small kernel of empirical truth, *έναν πυρήνα πραγματικότητας* (p. 133). His method of analysis is correspondingly twofold. On the one hand, he singles out narrative elements (*αφηγηματικά στοιχεία*) that are the common currency of pious legend and must therefore be symbolic rather than factual: thus, many an icon and relic are said to have travelled on their own by sea, as the *Portaitissa* did (pp. 66–67), and this reflects popular belief in the cleansing power of water (pp. 162–163).⁶ On the other hand, he connects certain details to concrete historical circumstances: the *Portaitissa*'s maritime voyage is a fictitious counterpart to actual journeys between Athos and Constantinople, which would be normally undertaken by ship (p. 164), and even the Georgian monk Gabriel who alone managed

παιδός (p. 65) vs. τῷ βασιλεῖ ἐνεφάνησαν τοίνυν καὶ τὰς γραφὰς τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ δέδωκαν, ἀνήγγειλάν τε τὰ τοῦ παιδίου συμβάντα (p. 128); πρὸς τὸν ἀδελφιδοῦν (p. 65) vs. τῷ ἀδελφῷ (p. 128); τῆς δομήσεως τοῦ ναοῦ. Ὁ δὲ ἀδελφιδοῦς αὐτοῦ, κομίσας (p. 65) vs. τὴν δόμῃσιν τοῦ ναοῦ. Ὁ δὲ ἀδελφὸς αὐτοῦ ἦν κομίσας (p. 128); εἰς μνημόσυνον αὐτοῦ (p. 65) vs. εἰς μνημόσυνον ἑαυτοῦ (p. 128); μουσίῳ ἀνιστόρησαν (p. 66) vs. μουσεῖον ἀνιστόρησαν (p. 128); ἕως τὴν σήμερον (p. 66) vs. μέχρι τὴν σήμερον (p. 129); πατήσας τὰ ὕδατα (p. 66) vs. πατήσας ἐπὶ τὰ ὕδατα (p. 129); ἐν τῷ ναῷ αὐτὴν εἰσήγαγον (p. 67) vs. ἐν τῷ ναῷ εἰσίασαν (p. 129); ἕως οὗ πάλιν ἀπεκαλύφθη (p. 67) vs. ἕως οὗ ἀπεκαλύφθη (p. 129); Ἐποιεῖ δὲ καθεκάστην ὡς ἡμέραι σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα πολλὰ (p. 67) vs. ἐπεὶ καθεκάστην ὁσημέραι σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα ποιεῖ πολλὰ (p. 130); δομῆσαι ναὸν εἰς μοναστήριον (p. 67) vs. δομῆσαι μοναστήριον (p. 130); καὶ φησὶ πρὸς αὐτόν· Τί περίλυπος εἶ (p. 68) vs. καὶ φησὶ· Τί περίλυπος εἶης (p. 131); αὐτὸς ἐκεῖσε (p. 68) vs. αὐτὸς ἐκεῖ (p. 131); τῶν ἐγκρίτων τῆς πόλεως καὶ τῆς κώμης (p. 68) [there is a slight misprint in the book here] vs. τῶν ἐγκρίτων τῆς κώμης καὶ τῆς πόλεως (p. 131); δυσμᾶς (p. 68) vs. δυσμᾶς ἡλίου (p. 131); Φράσσεται ἡμῖν. Οὕτω γὰρ ἐγίνωσκον τὰ παρὰ τοῦ ἀγίου γινόμενα. Οἱ δὲ διεζήσαν (p. 68) vs. Φράσατε ἡμῖν. Οἱ δὲ διεζήσαν (p. 131); τὰ ἐν αὐτοῖς γενόμενα (p. 68) vs. τὰ ἐν ᾧδε γενόμενα (p. 131); οὗ καὶ ἡ ἐπονυμία αὐτοῦ Εὐστράτιος (p. 68) vs. καὶ ἦν ὁ Εὐστράτιος· οὕτω γὰρ ἐκαλεῖτο (p. 131); ἔστη χαμαὶ (p. 69) vs. ἔφθυ ὑπὸ χαμαὶ (p. 132). I have disregarded LAMPROS' editorial corrections and list the original readings recorded in his apparatus.

5. Athos, Lavra I 58, f. 232v: Ἐγράφη χειρὶ οἰκτροῦ ἱερ(έως) Ματθαίου ἐν α^θ χ^θ ιδ^θ. The text of the *Patria* on ff. 186r–197v is also copied by the hand that wrote this note.

6. See also the excursus about wells on pp. 137–142.

to bring the icon onto dry land (εἰ μὴ Γαβριὴλ ὁ Ἰβηρ ἔλθοι ἐκ τοῦ Μικροῦ Ἄθωνος, οὐκ ἐξέρχομαι τῇ χέρσῳ [p. 66]) may be identical with a real-life hermit of the same name documented on Athos in the tenth century (pp. 165–167).

This effort to narrow the gap between legend and fact often results in long and learned digressions. Before she arrived on the Holy Mountain, the Virgin Mary was meant to sail to Georgia: ὁ δὲ κλῆρος αὐτῆς ἔπεσεν εἰς Ἰβερίαν ἀπελθεῖν (p. 62). In connection with this, we are told about the Georgians' claim that their nation descended from King David through Bathsheba, about the fourth-century baptism of Georgia, about Georgian monks who settled on Mount Athos, and about certain Georgian rulers' gifts to the monasteries there (pp. 85–116). Each of the five tales that comprise the *Patria* is subjected to similarly detailed analytical treatment (pp. 71–201).

Beside the historical background of BHG 1054u, there is also a literary background which LIVANOS outlines through comparison with other text of the same type.⁷ Some of these were written in late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Russia and were evidently based on the reports of travellers who had visited the Holy Mountain. The book includes full translations of two such works, rendered into Modern Greek by VICTORIA BOLSHAKOVA (pp. 126–127, 157–160).⁸ Had a third collection of Russian tales (discussed on pp. 29–30) been likewise translated, LIVANOS would have noticed that it ends with a Slavonic version of the Greek text which he edited on p. 62.⁹

It is a notable fact that a number of patrographic works were composed on the Holy Mountain by several anonymous authors in the first decades of the sixteenth century: the tale of the Latin sack of Athos (BHG 2333),¹⁰ the

7. There is a preliminary survey of these on pp. 18–25.

8. The originals were published by SIGURD O. SCHMIDT, *Сказания об афонских монастырях в новгородской рукописи XVI века*. In: *Древнерусская литература и ее связи с новым временем*, vol. 2. Moscow 1967, pp. 355–363, at 361–362, 358–360. The translation does not follow them all too closely; cf., for example, *Свеча ж горит перед тою иконою в день и в ночь и до сего дне от того огня* ('And even to the present day the candle in front of that icon burns day and night from that fire') with BOLSHAKOVA's *Το κερί μπροστά στην εικόνα είναι αναμμένο ακόμα και τώρα* (p. 127).

9. ALEXANDR G. BOBROV, «Повести древних лет». *Труды Отдела древнерусской литературы* 54 (2003) pp. 136–171, at 171. The manuscript is defective and breaks off with the words *и не смеяше ити* (καὶ οὐκ ἐτόλμα [ἀπελθεῖν]).

10. If I am not mistaken, LIVANOS' *Patria* (BHG 1054u) form a 'prequel' to that text: PARPULOV, *Slavonic Patria*, p. 2. LIVANOS points out (p. 48) that it is first attested in a

story of the *Portaitissa* icon (BHG 1070),¹¹ the newly-published *Patria* of Vatopedi,¹² as well as LIVANOS' BHG 1054u. That was also a time when the Hagiorites fabricated a number of pseudo-mediaeval documents.¹³ LIVANOS rightly attributes this 'historiographic' upsurge to two factors (pp. 210–211): the monks' fund-raising activity north of the Danube and their tense relations with the Ottoman state authorities. One hopes that he will carry on the fruitful investigations of which this first book of his forms a promising start.

Keywords

Greek hagiography; history of Mount Athos

manuscript from AD 1513/14.

11. LIVANOS somewhat hesitantly dates this work to the fourteenth or fifteenth century (pp. 154–155). His reservations are fully justified: it would have been enough to search *TLG* for the passage quoted in his note 472 (p. 155) in order to see that the fourteenth-century manuscript Diktyon 26138 does not contain BHG 1070.

12. GEORGI PAPULOV, *The Patria* of Vatopedi. *Revue des études byzantines* 81 (2023) pp. 237–284.

13. NICOLAS OIKONOMIDÈS, *Le temps des faux*. In: *Mount Athos in the 14th–16th Centuries* (Αθωνικά Σύμμεικτα 4). Athens 1997, pp. 69–74. Cf. also LIVANOS' amusing sentence: Ένα καταφανώς πλαστό χρυσόβουλλο [...] είναι καταφανώς πλαστό (pp. 173–174).